Momofuku Ando

Momofuku Ando (Japanese: 安藤 百福, Hepburn: *Andō Momofuku*; March 5, 1910 – January 5, 2007), born **Go Pek-Hok** (Chinese: 吳百福; Pe̍h-ōe-jī: *Gô͘ Pek-hok*; Tâi-lô: *Gôo Pik-hok*), was a Taiwanese-born, ethnic Chinese, Japanese inventor and businessman who founded Nissin Food Products Co., Ltd.[4] He is known as the inventor of Nissin Chikin Ramen, the first brand of commercially available prepackaged instant noodles, and the creator of the brands Top Ramen and Cup Noodles.[5][2][6]

Early life and education

Ando was born **Go Pek-Hok** (Chinese: 吳百福; Pe̍h-ōe-jī: *Gô͘ Pek-hok*; Tâi-lô: *Gôo Pik-hok*) in 1910 into a wealthy family in Chiayi, Taiwan, when Taiwan was under Japanese colonial rule. He was raised by his grandparents within the city walls of Tainan following the deaths of his parents.[3] His grandparents owned a small textiles store, which inspired him, at the age of 22, to start his own textiles company, using 190,000 yuan, in Daitōtei area in Taipei. In 1933, he traveled to Osaka, where he established a clothing company while studying economics at Ritsumeikan University.[3]

Career

Founding Nissin

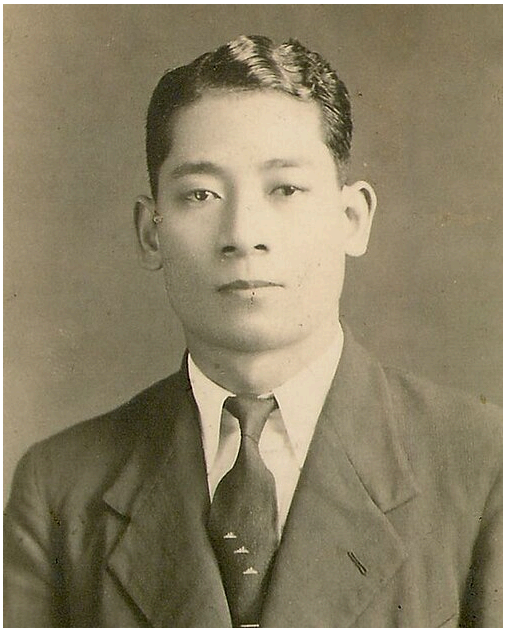
Ando was convicted of tax evasion in 1948 and served two years in jail. In his biography, Ando said he had provided scholarships for students, which at the time was a form of tax evasion. After he lost his company due to a chain-reaction bankruptcy, Ando founded what was to become Nissin in Ikeda, Osaka, Japan, starting off as a small family-run company producing salt.[4]

Invention of Nissin Chikin Ramen

A recreation of Ando's Workshop at the Momofuku Andō Instant Ramen Museum

With Japan still suffering from a shortage of food in the post-war era, the Ministry of Health tried to encourage people to eat bread made from wheat flour that was supplied by the United States. Ando wondered why bread was recommended instead of noodles, which were more familiar to the Japanese. The Ministry's response was that noodle companies were too small and unstable to satisfy supply needs, so Ando decided to develop the production of noodles by himself. The experience convinced him that "Peace will come to the world when the people have enough to eat."[7]

On August 25, 1958, at the age of 48, and after months of trial and error experimentation to perfect his flash-frying method, Ando marketed the first package of precooked instant noodles. The original chicken flavor is called *Chikin Ramen*. It was originally considered a luxury item, with its price of ¥35[a] around six times that of traditional udon and soba noodles at the time. As of 2025, Chikin Ramen is still sold in Japan, and now retails for around ¥120 (US$0.77), or

Momofuku Ando	
安藤 百福	
 Photograph of Ando, c. 1930	
Born	Go Pek-hok (吳百福) March 5, 1910 Chiayi, Taiwan (now Puzi, Chiayi County, Taiwan)
Died	January 5, 2007 (aged 96) Ikeda, Osaka Prefecture, Japan
Citizenship	Japanese (Taiwan under Japanese colonial rule) (1910–1945) Republic of China (1945–1966) Japanese (1966–2007)[1][2]
Alma mater	Ritsumeikan University[3]

approximately one-third the price of the cheapest bowl of noodles in a Japanese restaurant.

Known for	The invention of Nissin Chikin Ramens Founder of the Nissin Food Products Co., Ltd.
Spouse	Masako Ando
Children	3, including Koki
Chinese name	
Traditional Chinese	吳百福
Simplified Chinese	吴百福
Transcriptions	**[show]**
Japanese name	
Kanji	安藤 百福
Hiragana	あんどう ももふく
Katakana	アンドウ モモフク
Transcriptions	**[show]**

Cup Noodles invention

Nissin Cup Noodles (1971 ~)

According to *The Financial Times*, Ando's invention of Cup Noodles in 1971, at the age of 61, helped spark the popularity of instant noodles overseas. He had observed that Americans ate noodles by breaking the noodles in half, putting them into a paper cup, and pouring hot water over the noodles. They also ate them with a fork instead of chopsticks. Ando was inspired, and felt that a Styrofoam cup—with a narrower bottom than the top—would be the ideal vessel for holding noodles and keeping them warm. Eating the noodles would then be as easy as opening the lid, adding hot water and waiting. This simplicity, efficiency and low price of Cup Noodles went on to transform Nissin's fortunes.[10]

Ando began the sales of his most famous product, Cup Noodle (カップヌードル, *Kappu Nūdoru*), on September 18, 1971, with the idea of providing a waterproof polystyrene container.[11] As prices dropped, instant ramen soon became a booming business. Worldwide demand reached 98 billion servings in 2009.[12]

In 1972, the Asama-Sansō hostage standoff took place in Nagano Prefecture, Japan. Widespread coverage of the event, which included repeated images of the prefectural Riot Police Unit eating the noodles on national television, have been conjectured as boosting awareness of the brand.[13][14]

Industry memberships

In 1964, seeking a way to promote the instant noodle industry, Ando founded the Instant Food Industry Association, which set guidelines for fair competition and product quality, introducing several industry standards such as the inclusion of production dates on packaging and the "fill to" line.

Ando also founded and became chairman of the International Ramen Manufacturers Association (IRMA) in 1997, later renamed to the World Instant Noodles Association (WINA), after seeing the need for greater oversight on instant noodles through a regulatory body.[15]

Personal life and death

After World War II, Japan surrendered colonies and territories it occupied during its imperial expansion, and Taiwan was received by the Republic of China (ROC).[16] Ando received his Taiwanese (ROC) citizenship but stayed in Japan.[2]

Nevertheless, in 1966, Ando naturalized through marriage and became a Japanese citizen. "Momofuku" is the Japanese pronunciation of his given name (百福; *Pek-hok*), while *Andō* (安藤) is the surname of his Japanese wife.

Ando died of heart failure on January 5, 2007, at a hospital in Ikeda, Osaka Prefecture, at the age of 96.[7]

Ando was survived by his wife Masako, two sons and a daughter. Ando claimed that the secret of his long life was playing golf and eating chicken ramen almost every day. He was said to have eaten instant ramen until the day he died.[17][18]

Legacy

Commemoration

"MOMOFUKU Noodle", by NISSIN

On April 8, 2008, a ramen summit was held in Osaka and a bronze statue of Ando was unveiled at the Momofuku Ando Instant Ramen Museum in Ikeda, Osaka Prefecture[19] The statue depicts Ando standing atop a base resembling a noodle container while holding a noodle cup container in his right hand. Yasuhiro Nakasone (former Prime Minister of Japan) and Masako Ando (Ando's wife) attended the unveiling ceremony.

On October 1, 2008, the company's name was changed to "NISSIN FOODS HOLDINGS". At the same time, Nissin Foods Products Co., Ltd was founded. In the same year, Project Hyakufukusi was started.

On March 5, 2015, Google placed a doodle created by Google artist Sophie Diao on its main web page commemorating Ando's birthday.[20][21]

The name of the Momofuku restaurants in the United States alludes to Momofuku Ando.[22]

Honors

Ando was repeatedly honored with medals by the Japanese government and the emperor—including The Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star, Second Class—in 2002, which is the second-most

prestigious Japanese decoration for Japanese civilians.

- Medal of Honor with Blue Ribbon (1977)
- Order of the Sacred Treasure, Second Class, Gold and Silver Star (1982)
- Medal of Honor with Purple Ribbon (1983)
- Director-General of the Science and Technology Agency "Distinguished Service Award" (1992)
- Order of the Rising Sun, Second Class, Gold and Silver Star (2002)

Foreign decoration

- Order of the Direkgunabhorn of Thailand, Fourth Clastas, (2001)[23]

Order of precedence

- Senior fourth rank (2007, posthumous)

See also

- List of instant noodle brands
- List of inventors

Notes

a. US$0.10 in 1958, under the then-current exchange rate of 360 yen to the dollar.[8] However, equivalent to ¥608 by 2021, or US$5.69 under the current exchange rate of US$1 to ¥106.775.[9]

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